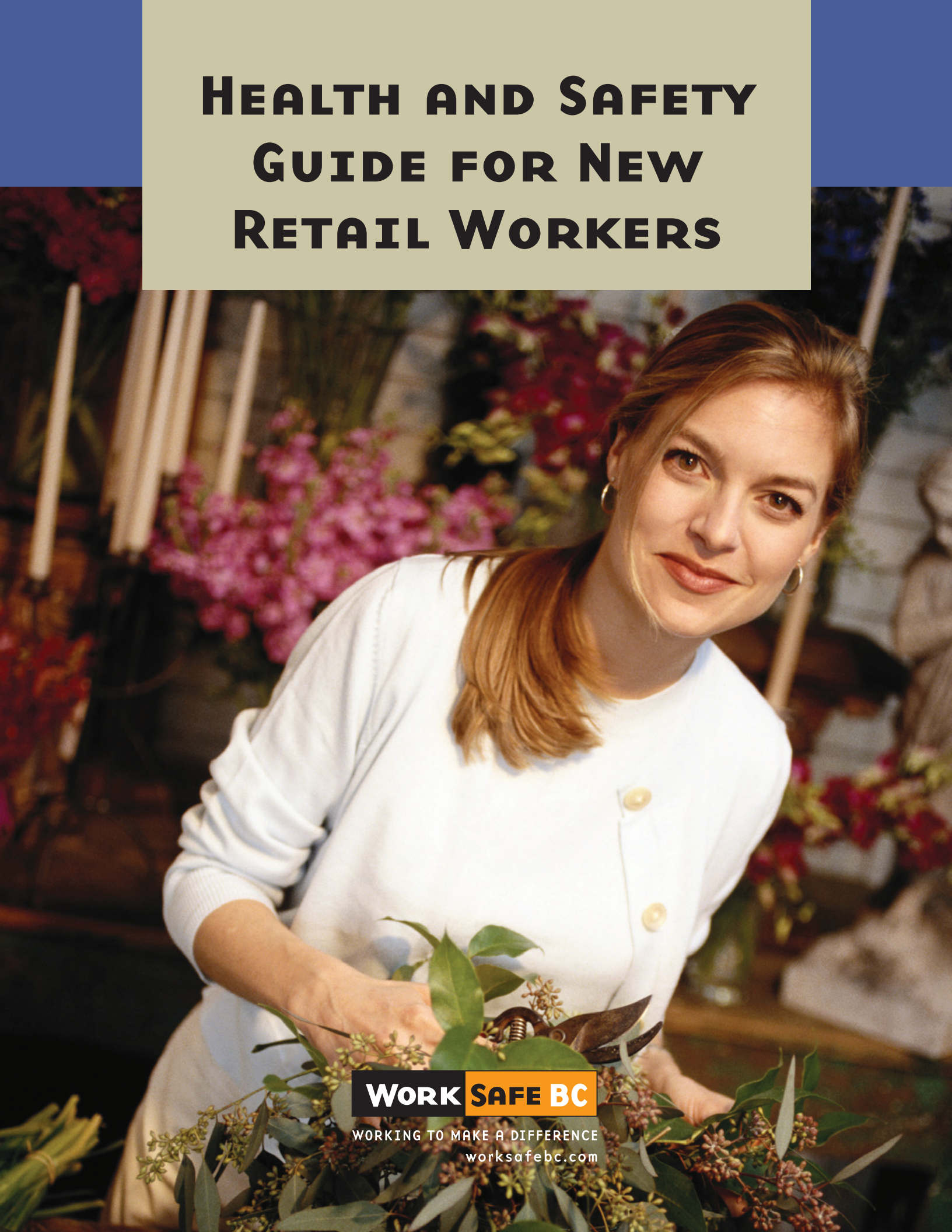


HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDE FOR NEW RETAIL WORKERS



WORK SAFE BC

WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
worksafebc.com

About WorkSafeBC

WorkSafeBC (the Workers' Compensation Board) is an independent provincial statutory agency governed by a Board of Directors. It is funded by insurance premiums paid by registered employers and by investment returns. In administering the *Workers Compensation Act*, WorkSafeBC remains separate and distinct from government; however, it is accountable to the public through government in its role of protecting and maintaining the overall well-being of the workers' compensation system.

WorkSafeBC was born out of a compromise between B.C.'s workers and employers in 1917 where workers gave up the right to sue their employers or fellow workers for injuries on the job in return for a no-fault insurance program fully paid for by employers. WorkSafeBC is committed to a safe and healthy workplace, and to providing return-to-work rehabilitation and legislated compensation benefits to workers injured as a result of their employment.

WorkSafeBC Prevention Information Line

The WorkSafeBC Prevention Information Line can answer your questions about workplace health and safety, worker and employer responsibilities, and reporting a workplace accident or incident. The Prevention Information Line accepts anonymous calls.

Phone 604 276-3100 in the Lower Mainland, or call 1 888 621-7233 (621-SAFE) toll-free in British Columbia.

To report after-hours and weekend accidents and emergencies, call 604 273-7711 in the Lower Mainland, or call 1 866 922-4357 (WCB-HELP) toll-free in British Columbia.

Health and Safety Guide for New Retail Workers



WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
worksafebc.com

Acknowledgments

This publication would not have been possible without the generous assistance of various organizations and individuals involved with small business in British Columbia. WorkSafeBC would like to thank Shelfspace (formerly Retail BC), the Retail Council of Canada, and the other organizations and their representatives who helped produce the first edition, which this reprint is based on.

WorkSafeBC publications

Many publications are available on the WorkSafeBC web site. The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and associated policies and guidelines, as well as excerpts and summaries of the *Workers Compensation Act*, are also available on the web site (WorkSafeBC.com).

Some publications are also available for purchase in print:

Phone: 604 232-9704

Toll-free phone: 1 866 319-9704

Fax: 604 232-9703

Toll-free fax: 1 888 232-9714

Online ordering: WorkSafeBC.com and click on Publications; follow the links for ordering

© 2010 Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia. All rights reserved. The Workers' Compensation Board of B.C. encourages the copying, reproduction, and distribution of this document to promote health and safety in the workplace, provided that the Workers' Compensation Board of B.C. is acknowledged. However, no part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, or distributed for profit or other commercial enterprise, nor may any part be incorporated into any other publication, without written permission of the Workers' Compensation Board of B.C.

2010 edition

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Health and safety guide for new retail workers [electronic resource].

Electronic monograph in PDF format.

Issued also in printed form.

ISBN 978-0-7726-6309-2

1. Retail trade—British Columbia—Employees—Safety measures—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Industrial safety—British Columbia—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 3. Industrial hygiene—British Columbia—Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. WorkSafeBC

HD8039 M39 H44 2010

363.11'9381109711

C2010-904620-X

Contents

Introduction	1
Purpose of this guide	1
Who should use this guide	2
 Part 1: Health and Safety Q&A	 3
Who is responsible for workplace health and safety?	3
Your responsibilities as a worker	3
Your employer's responsibilities.....	3
Your supervisor's responsibilities.....	4
What are your workplace health and safety rights?	5
Refusing unsafe work.....	5
What safety training or education will you need?.....	6
How will safety information be communicated to you?	7
Will you be required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE)?	7
Who provides and pays for PPE?	8
Worker responsibility	8
Employer responsibility.....	8
How to choose PPE	8
What should you do if something goes wrong?	9
Who to talk to if you have health and safety concerns	9
What to do if you are injured on the job.....	9
 Part 2: Safety Tips.....	 11
Musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs).....	12
Lifting and handling materials	13
Slips, trips, and falls	14

Stepladders.....	15
Violence in the workplace	16
Handling money	17
Harassment.....	18
Shoplifting and robbery.....	19
Working alone.....	21
Travelling to and from work	23
Hazardous products	24
Biological hazards	25
Knives, box cutters, and other sharps	26
Power tools and equipment	27
Noise	28
Forklifts and pallet jacks	29

Part 3: Dealing with Emergencies 31

Earthquake	32
What to do during an earthquake.....	32
Evacuation.....	32
Fire.....	33
First aid	33

Other resources

WorkSafeBC publications.....	34
Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.....	34
Industry associations.....	34

Introduction

Are you thinking about getting into the workforce or moving to a new job or position in the retail industry? Finding or starting a new job can be intimidating, especially if it is your first job. While you are job hunting, keep in mind that a new job is about more than just working and getting paid. It is also about coming home safely at the end of each workday.

Every workplace has its hazards, yet few people think of themselves as being at risk. In fact, new and young workers are injured on the job every day in British Columbia.

In the retail industry, the leading causes of injury are:

- Handling bags, boxes, and other objects
- Using tools and equipment (for example, anything from box cutters to pallet jacks)
- Slips, trips, and falls



Purpose of this guide

This guide is meant to increase awareness of workplace safety and provide some specific safety tips for retail workers. It focuses on what you need to know to have a safe and healthy work experience, and discusses your rights and responsibilities around health and safety on the job. There are three parts to this guide:

- Part 1 provides basic information about workplace health and safety.
- Part 2 provides some safety tips for common hazards.
- Part 3 provides information for dealing with emergencies.

We encourage you to read this guide before meeting with a potential employer and to keep it as a handy reference after you start your new job. This guide is meant as a general resource only — not all workplace hazards are covered. For more information, see the publications listed in “Other Resources,” on page 34. **For specific legal or regulatory requirements, consult the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and the *Workers Compensation Act*.** These are available online at WorkSafeBC.com.

Who should use this guide

You should find useful information in this guide, whether you are thinking about moving to a new job in retail or you are entering the workforce for the first time. If you have questions about your rights and responsibilities or how you can stay safe in the workplace, you've come to the right place.

If you are an employer, this guide provides references to other publications that have been written with your needs in mind. For example, the WorkSafeBC publication *Health and Safety for Retail Small Business* is particularly helpful for small- to medium-sized employers in the retail sector. It can be found online at WorkSafeBC.com.

Other resources

You can find the guide and many other workplace safety resources online by going to WorkSafeBC.com, www.retailcouncil.org, or www.retailbc.org. You can also contact the WorkSafeBC Prevention Information Line at 604 276-3100 or toll-free at 1 800 621-SAFE (7233).

Health and Safety Q&A

Who is responsible for workplace health and safety?

Everyone in the workplace, including you, your co-workers, your supervisor, and your employer, has a responsibility to protect you and the people around you from injury — that's the law. Knowing about these responsibilities will help you work safely and contribute to making your workplace safer.

Your responsibilities as a worker

- Know and follow the health and safety requirements that are relevant to your job.
- If you don't know how to do something safely, ask for training before you begin work.
- Work safely, and encourage your co-workers to do the same.
- Correct any unsafe conditions immediately (for example, spills or loose electrical cords) or report them to your supervisor.
- Immediately report any injury to a first aid attendant or supervisor.

Take the initiative. Make suggestions to improve health and safety. If this is your first job, you may also want to read the WorkSafeBC publication *Be a Survivor*, a guide for young workers.

Your employer's responsibilities

- Provide a safe and healthy workplace.
- Ensure that you and your co-workers are adequately trained, and keep records of your training.
- Provide a comprehensive occupational health and safety program, including a written health and safety policy (you can ask to see a copy) and an incident investigation procedure.
- Support supervisors, safety co-ordinators, and workers in their health and

safety activities. A good employer encourages safe work practices at all times.

- Take action immediately when a worker or supervisor reports a potentially hazardous situation.
- Initiate an immediate investigation into incidents.
- Report serious incidents to WorkSafeBC.
- Provide adequate first aid facilities and services.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) where required. See pages 7–8 for more information about PPE.

For the employer

For guidance on how to set up a health and safety program, see the WorkSafeBC publication *Health and Safety for Retail Small Business*.

For regulatory requirements, see sections 3.1 to 3.4 of the Regulation.

Your supervisor's responsibilities

- Instruct you and your co-workers in safe work procedures.
- Train you for all assigned tasks, and check that your work is being done safely.
- Ensure that only authorized, adequately trained workers operate tools and equipment or use hazardous chemicals.
- Ensure that equipment and materials are properly handled, stored, and maintained.
- Enforce health and safety requirements.
- Correct unsafe acts and conditions.
- Identify workers with problems that could affect safety at the worksite.
- Follow up with interviews and referrals where necessary.
- Formulate health and safety rules, and inspect the workplace for hazards.

For employers and supervisors

For more information on orientation and training, see the following WorkSafeBC publications:

- *3 Steps to Effective Worker Education and Training*
- *Young Worker Orientation*

If you are asked to supervise other workers, make sure you have been trained to do the job and understand your responsibilities.

What are your workplace health and safety rights?

Not only do you have a duty to work safely; as a worker you also have several basic rights related to health and safety:

- **The right to know and be trained in** safe work practices in all aspects of your job and how to recognize on-the-job hazards
- **The right to supervision** to make sure you can work with minimal risk
- **The right to participate** in health and safety matters, either directly or through a joint health and safety committee or worker representative
- **The right to employer-provided safety equipment** required for your job, although you are responsible for providing your own safety footwear and headgear
- **The right to refuse work**, without being fired or disciplined for refusing, if you have reasonable cause to believe that the work process, equipment, or environment poses an undue risk of injury to you or another person



Refusing unsafe work

If you think a task is likely to endanger you or your co-workers, don't be afraid to speak up. Follow these guidelines to refuse work that you believe is unsafe:

1. Explain to your immediate supervisor why you're not comfortable.
2. If your immediate supervisor is unavailable or doesn't give you a good answer, go to his or her supervisor.
3. If you are still not satisfied, talk to your worker health and safety representative, a member of the joint committee, or a shop steward.
4. If you are still unable to resolve the issue, phone WorkSafeBC anonymously at 604 276-3100 in the Lower Mainland, or 1 888 621-7233 (621-SAFE) toll-free in B.C.

What safety training or education will you need?

Before you begin work, your employer is responsible for providing the health and safety training you need to work safely. Until you have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform a task, you must be under the direct supervision of someone who has that knowledge and those skills.

When you start a new job, your orientation should include basic information about workplace health and safety, including the following:

- Your supervisor's name and contact information
- Your rights and responsibilities
- Workplace health and safety rules
- Hazards you may be exposed to, including risks from robbery, assault, or confrontation
- Instruction in and demonstration of how to do your job safely
- What to do if you are working alone or in isolation
- How to protect yourself against violence in the workplace
- How to work safely with hazardous products, including the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)
- What PPE is required, and how and when to wear it
- How to get first aid
- How to report injuries and other incidents
- How to report potential hazards and unsafe work conditions
- What to do in an emergency, including the location of emergency exits (for more information, see Part 3 of this guide)
- Who is responsible for health and safety (you should meet this person) and how to make contact

If you haven't received this training, ask your supervisor or employer about it.

How will safety information be communicated to you?

Employers committed to safety may communicate safety information to employees in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Through formal training sessions
- Through supervisors
- During staff meetings
- Via e-mail
- On health and safety notice boards
- On posters and notices
- Through the health and safety committee (or worker health and safety representative, if applicable)

Will you be required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE)?

PPE is safety gear or clothing designed to protect you from injury and disease when it is not possible to eliminate workplace hazards completely. For many retail jobs, PPE is unnecessary. However, some retail jobs require PPE for hazards that cannot be eliminated by other means.

Examples of PPE in the retail industry

Type of PPE	Use
Safety vest	When working around moving equipment such as forklifts and vehicles
Work gloves and safety shoes	When handling garbage or working in storage areas
Disposable gloves	When working in a grocery deli or cleaning bathrooms
Cut-resistant gloves	For some cutting and equipment cleaning operations
Eye protection and gloves	For protection from chemicals
Hearing protection	For protection from loud noise

Who provides and pays for PPE?

Worker responsibility

Unless otherwise agreed upon with your employer, you must provide the following, at your cost:

- Clothing for protection against the natural elements (for example, if you have to work outside unloading stock)
- Safety headgear (for example, a hard hat)
- Safety footwear (for example, steel-toe boots for stockroom work)
- General-purpose gloves*

*If a product or work activity requires specific gloves, your employer must provide them.

Employer responsibility

Your employer must provide, at **no cost** to you, all other PPE required for the job. If you suffer an adverse health effect from employer-provided PPE (for example, an allergic reaction to latex gloves), your employer is responsible for providing an appropriate and equally protective substitute.

How to choose PPE

When you purchase PPE such as your hard hat or safety boots, check that it meets safety standards. Approved equipment will have a permanent marking or label indicating what standard it meets. For example, safety boots may be marked with a green CSA triangle.

Next, make sure the PPE fits well and is comfortable. If it does not fit properly it may not provide adequate protection. If it is too tight or loose, you may be less likely to wear it. If possible, work with your employer to select PPE.

What should you do if something goes wrong?

Who to talk to if you have health and safety concerns

Your supervisor or manager should always be kept informed of all safety concerns. In addition, your workplace should also have either a worker health and safety representative or a joint health and safety committee that you can go to with health and safety concerns.

What to do if you are injured on the job

By law, you are required to report any work-related injury to your supervisor and first aid attendant as soon as possible.

First aid facilities

Every workplace has to provide some level of first aid. For a small, low-hazard workplace close to a medical facility, a first aid kit may be all that is required. Larger worksites may require a first aid attendant and possibly a first aid room. During your orientation, you should find out specific information about first aid procedures in the workplace, including:

- How and when to report an injury
- Who to report the incident to
- Where to find a first aid attendant, first aid room, or first aid kit

If transport to hospital is required, your employer is required to pay for it.

Reporting injuries

Your employer must report any workplace injury or disease to WorkSafeBC. Telling you not to report an injury or disease, or trying to talk you out of reporting to WorkSafeBC, is against the law. **You have the right to report any workplace injury or disease.**

WorkSafeBC will compensate you or your dependants only for a work-related injury or disease. For injuries, this generally means you must have been working when you were hurt and the injury must have been caused by something to do with your job. For a disease, this means that the disease must be caused by the work or the work environment.

For the employer

To learn more about the first aid requirements for your workplace, see sections 3.14 to 3.21 of the Regulation.

For the worker

For information on filing a claim, see the WorkSafeBC publication *Managing Your WorkSafeBC Claim: The Basics of Workers' Compensation*.



Investigating accidents

If an accident happens, your employer should have a system for investigating it and reporting it to WorkSafeBC. Your responsibility in the process is to be as helpful as you can to your employer and WorkSafeBC officers to get at the cause of the accident.

Safety Tips

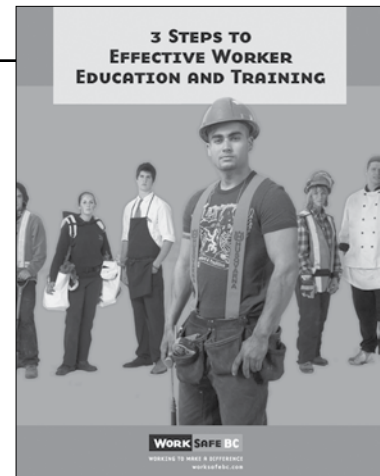
Your employer or supervisor must tell you about any potential dangers that they are aware of in the workplace — that's the law. Some common health and safety concerns in retail include:

- Musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs)
- Lifting and handling materials
- Slips, trips, and falls
- Stepladders
- Violence in the workplace
- Handling money
- Harassment
- Shoplifting and robbery
- Working alone
- Travelling to and from work
- Hazardous products
- Biological hazards
- Knives, box cutters, and other sharps
- Power tools and equipment
- Noise
- Forklifts and pallet jacks

If you spot an instance of these or other hazards in your workplace, notify your employer or supervisor immediately.

For the employer

For more information, see the WorkSafeBC publication *3 Steps to Effective Worker Education and Training*.



Musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs)

Sprains and strains, also known as musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs), are the most common type of work-related injury. These can arise from repetitive movement or overexertion, such as working in an awkward position or performing the same movements repeatedly (for example, scanning items at a checkout).

It is important to recognize the early signs and symptoms of MSI. The sooner treatment starts, the better. Signs and symptoms include swelling, redness, difficulty moving a particular body part, numbness, tingling, and pain. If you notice any early signs or symptoms, report them to your supervisor, manager, or employer. Depending on your company's procedures, your first step might be to report to the first aid attendant or joint health and safety committee.

Safety tips

- Avoid long periods of repetitive movement — rotate tasks, take micro-breaks, and change your position.
- Avoid awkward positions — use an adjustable chair or stool, adjust the work area height to a good working level for you, and arrange your tools and equipment to make things easy to reach.
- Wear low-heeled comfortable shoes.
- Avoid twisting your body — move your feet to change position.
- Ask your employer to consider replacing old or worn-out tools with tools designed to prevent MSIs.

For more information, read *Understanding the Risks of Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI): An Educational Guide for Workers on Sprains, Strains, and other MSIs*.

For the employer

For more information, see the WorkSafeBC publication *3 Steps to Effective Worker Education and Training*.

Employers are required to conduct risk assessments to identify potential MSI hazards. For more information about preventing MSI, see the following WorkSafeBC publications:

- *Back Talk: An Owner's Manual for Backs*
- *Ergonomic Tips for the Hospitality Industry* (a series of 8 pamphlets)
- *Preventing Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI): A Guide for Employers and Joint Committees*

Lifting and handling materials

Improper lifting and handling of heavy or bulky objects is a major source of strains, sprains, neck and back injuries, cuts, bruises, broken bones, and hernias. Any one of these injuries can affect you for the rest of your life.

When lifting, you need to think about your posture and the force required to lift the load. Muscles and tendons can be overloaded, especially when your body is in an awkward posture.

Safety tips

- Where possible, avoid lifting and carrying heavy or awkward objects. Instead, use mechanical devices such as forklifts, hoists, carts, and dollies.
- Avoid twisting your back and reaching above your shoulders when lifting.
- Get help from others.
- Lift smaller loads by planning and adjusting weight distribution ahead of time.
- Hold the object you are lifting as close to your body as possible.
- Avoid awkward work postures such as bending, reaching, and twisting.
- Try to keep the load between your knees and shoulders, without twisting your body. Pivot with your feet instead of twisting your back.
- Bend at your knees, not at your waist. This will help you keep your centre of balance and let the strong muscles in your legs do the lifting.
- Lift smoothly and slowly.
- Get a good grip. Use your hands, not just your fingers, to grip the load.
- Avoid performing the same lifting task repeatedly over a long period. If possible, vary the task with another activity that uses different muscles.
- Limit the number of shopping carts you collect at one time, and push loaded carts rather than pulling them.

Working in storage areas

- When stacking boxes and other items, stack the heaviest items between knee and chest level to minimize lifting.
- Take micro-breaks, stretch, and vary the load (alternate heavy and light items).
- Make sure stacked boxes or other items are stable enough not to tip.
- Use a ladder or step stool to reach high items.
- Watch for ice in cold-storage areas.

Slips, trips, and falls

Slips, trips, and falls account for many injuries in the retail industry. Examples of hazards include:

- Slippery floors such as a store entrance on a rainy day, the work area behind a deli counter, and freshly washed floors
- Cluttered walkways in retail and storage areas
- Icy patches in refrigerated storage areas
- Dark, uneven, and wet parking lot surfaces

Safety tips

- Wear well-fitting non-slip footwear.
- Keep walkways and work areas clear of boxes, loose electrical cords and other clutter.
- Clean up spills right away or mark the area to warn others and report the spill to the person responsible for ensuring the spill is cleaned up.
- Don't carry more than you can safely handle. Get another person to help you or use a dolly.
- Be sure you can see where you are going when carrying large items.
- When stocking shelves, place the heaviest items between knee and chest level.
- Use a stepladder rather than a chair or crate to reach high items.



Stepladders

In retail, many falls involve stepladders. Stepladders are in almost every workplace and home, so most people treat them as a safe convenience rather than a potential hazard. Every year in B.C., hundreds of workers are injured when using stepladders that are either placed or used inappropriately. Injuries occur when the worker falls from the ladder, the ladder tips over or collapses, or fingers are caught when folding up the ladder.

Safety tips

- Look closely at the ladder before using it to ensure that no parts are broken, cracked, or missing. If there is a problem, don't use the ladder — report it to your supervisor.
- Place the ladder on a firm, level surface. Make sure it is fully opened, with the spreaders locked in place. Never use a stepladder folded up and leaning against a surface.
- Maintain three points of contact with the ladder at all times (for example, one hand and two feet).
- Keep your centre of gravity between the side rails, especially if you are carrying materials. Don't lean out to one side.
- Don't stand on the shelf or top two steps.
- Never carry heavy, bulky, or awkward objects that may make going up or down the ladder unsafe.
- Keep your fingers out of the pinch points when you're folding the ladder up.



Violence in the workplace

Workers in the retail industry experience more cases of violence than workers in many other industries. If you work alone, your employer must have a system in place to ensure your well-being. Such a system must include check-ins at designated time intervals and provisions for emergency rescue if it is ever needed.

Preventing confrontations

- Greet customers and make eye contact when they enter the store.
- Before a person is left to work alone, check that all the doors and windows are locked and that no one is in the washroom or storage room.
- Do not resist if there is a threat of violence.

Dealing with irate customers

If you work in retail, it is almost inevitable that you will have to deal with an irate customer at some point. Follow these guidelines for dealing with irate customers:

- Focus on the emotions first, try to remain calm, and try to calm the other person.
- Try to avoid escalating the situation. Find ways to help the irate customer save face.
- Listen carefully and try to put yourself in the customer's shoes, so you can better understand how to solve the problem.
- If you can't address their concern, take the customer's name and number and promise to forward the information to your manager or supervisor.
- If you cannot calm the person, ask for help.

See the safety tips on the following pages for handling money, harassment, dealing with shoplifting and robbery, and working alone.

For the employer

For more information, see the WorkSafeBC publication *Preventing Violence, Robbery, and Theft*.



Handling money

Handling money can expose you to the potential for violence. Your employer should have procedures in place to help you stay safe when handling money.

Safety tips

- Handle money at a location away from entrances and exits.
- Keep as little cash in the cash register as possible.
- Place large bills in a drop box, safe, or strong room that is out of sight.
- Vary the time and route for making bank deposits.
- Avoid making bank deposits at night.
- Don't carry money in bags that make it obvious you're carrying cash.
- Make deposits with a co-worker, if possible. The co-worker should face away from the depository to keep an eye on other people in the area.

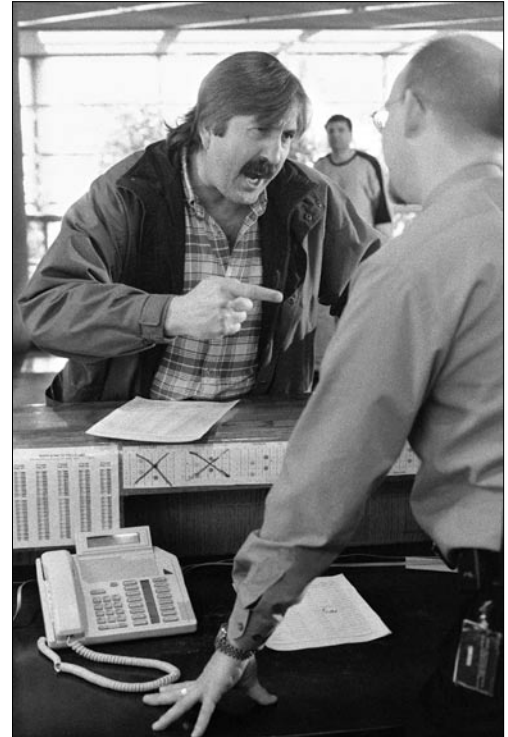
Employers can also make the workplace safer by fitting counter safes with time-delay locks.



Harassment

An unwelcome behaviour or comment that is harmful to the work environment is considered to be harassment. Harassment takes many forms but can generally be defined as an insulting, intimidating, humiliating, malicious, degrading, or offensive comment or act directed toward another person or group. This would also include bullying, sexual harassment, and offensive displays.

Although harassment typically doesn't include physical violence, it can be very harmful and it does affect the overall health of the work environment. Harassment may not be the kind of incident you would report to WorkSafeBC, but it can affect your health and your ability to work safely.



Safety tips

- Tell the harasser to stop. Do this right away by saying it or writing it in a letter or e-mail. If that doesn't work, follow the next three steps.
- Tell your employer or the person your employer has appointed to receive and handle harassment complaints.
- Talk about it with someone you trust (for example, a co-worker, friend, or relative).
- Write it down. To help make your case in an investigation, write down each remark or incident (using the exact words if possible), including dates, times, places, and the names of any witnesses.

Shoplifting and robbery

The main concern in the event of theft or robbery is your safety, and that of your co-workers and customers. Money and merchandise taken during a robbery can be replaced; people can't be.

Preventing shoplifting

The chances of shoplifting increase when you work alone. If you think someone is shoplifting, contact security or someone professionally trained to deal with the situation. Never approach or try to apprehend a shoplifter, especially if you are working alone. After the shoplifter leaves, write down as much information about the incident as possible. This should include the shoplifter's height, weight, hair and skin colour, and clothing. If a vehicle is involved, write down the make, colour, approximate year, and licence plate number.

Preventing robbery

The best way to prevent injury resulting from robbery is to prevent the robbery from happening in the first place. Some businesses have internal security staff and specific instructions for dealing with robbery, but others may not. Here are some tips to help protect you.

Make the store attractive to customers and unattractive to robbers

- Keep the store clean, tidy, and well lit.
- When there are no customers at your sales counter or checkout, keep busy by doing tasks such as cleaning, dusting, or sweeping.
- Stay away from the sales counter when there are no customers in the store.
- Keep the cash register fund to a minimum — ask customers for exact change or the smallest bills possible.

For the employer

Consider these tips for “hardening the target”:

- Keep the store clean and well stocked.
- Do not put posters or signs where they will block the area around the register from view.
- If possible, ensure that workers can see out of the store, and customers and police can see in.
- Make a cash drop or safety deposit box available.
- Post signs that say “Minimum cash is kept on premises.”
- Operate only one register from late at night to early morning.
- Ensure that outside phone contact can be made from more than one place in the store.

Stay alert

- Be aware of cars parked across the street or off to one side of the lot.
- Look for anyone who may be watching the store or loitering in or around it.
- If you are concerned about a person or vehicle, do not hesitate to contact your supervisor or the appropriate authorities.
- Know the locations of phones or available help outside the premises.
- Connect with potential customers.
- Give a friendly greeting to everyone who enters the store.
- When a shopper is nearby, act in a friendly manner, and briefly look directly into their eyes.
- Ask people alone in the aisle if they would like any help.

If a robbery occurs

Your employer will provide specific instructions for dealing with robberies. However, the following tips may be helpful:

- **Keep it short** — The longer a robbery takes the more nervous the robber becomes.
- **Stay calm** — Handle the entire situation as if you were making a sale to a customer.
- **Obey the robber's orders** — Let the robber know you intend to cooperate. Hand over cash and merchandise and do exactly as the robber says.
- **If you are not sure what the robber is telling you, ask.**
- **Tell the robber about any possible surprises** — Tell the robber before reaching for anything or moving in any way. Tell the robber if another employee is in the back room so the robber will not be startled.
- **Don't try to stop the robber** — Trying to fight with a robber is foolhardy, not heroic. If you don't see a weapon, always assume the robber has one.
- **Don't chase or follow the robber** — This will only invite violence, and it may confuse the police as to who is involved with the robbery.
- **Write down information immediately** — As soon as the robber has left, make notes about their appearance, mannerisms, and specific features, as well as the time and the direction they took when they left.
- **Call the police or appropriate authorities** — Dial 911 or your local emergency number.

Working alone

Working alone or in isolation means to work in circumstances where help would not be readily available to you in case of emergency, injury, or illness. To determine whether or not assistance is “readily available,” ask the following questions:

- Are other people in the vicinity?
- Are those people aware of your need for assistance?
- Are they willing to provide assistance?
- Are they able to provide assistance in a timely manner?

Safety tips

Know your person check procedures — someone should contact you regularly to make sure you’re okay. These procedures should include:

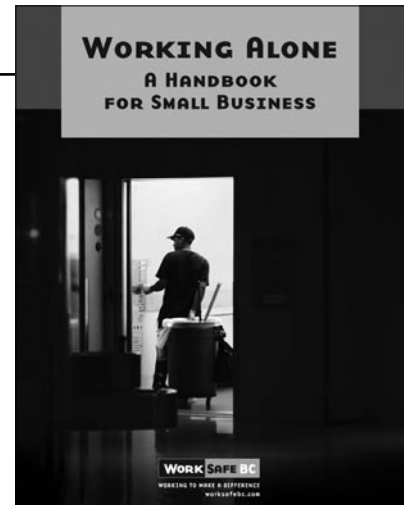
- Who will be contacting you
- How they will contact you (for example, by phone or in person)
- What they will do if they fail to make contact

Other tips:

- Have an emergency phone number handy.
- Give a friendly greeting to anyone who enters the store.
- If possible, do not open back doors and leave them unattended. Keep back doors locked from the inside when not in use (but don’t violate local fire codes).
- Do higher-risk tasks such as emptying garbage in the back lane when there is more than one employee working. If possible, do not empty the garbage at night, especially if the dumpster is in a secluded spot or back alley.
- Make sure outside lights are on before stepping outside.
- Park close to the building in a well-lit area.
- Identify a safe retreat where you can call for help in the event of a robbery.

For the employer

You must have written procedures for checking the well-being of workers and getting emergency help when they need it. For further information, see the WorkSafeBC publication *Working Alone: A Handbook for Small Business*.



Working at a gas station

Working at a gas station, particularly at night, can be hazardous.

To reduce the hazard level, your employer must follow the requirements for barriers, locked doors, and prepayment of fuel (see sections 4.20.1 to 4.23 of the Regulation).

Follow your employer's procedures requiring vehicle fuel to be prepaid before it is pumped. The requirement applies 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and includes full-serve and self-serve establishments. Fuel prepayment includes:

- Using pay-at-the-pump technology
- Paying cash to an attendant before fueling
- Providing a credit card or debit card to an attendant to pre-authorize a certain amount of fuel
- Providing a credit card to an attendant prior to fueling
- For customers with a standing fuel account with the station, providing the attendant with account information prior to fueling

Late night retail premises

The Regulation includes specific requirements for gas stations and other late night retail premises. See section 4.22.1 and its associated guidelines for the most current requirements. Late night retail premises means a retail location that is open to the public for late night hours, including the following:

- A gas station or other retail fueling outlet
- A convenience store or any other retail store where goods are sold directly to consumers

Travelling to and from work

Your employer can't control the environment outside the workplace. However, there are several things you can do to ensure a safer trip to and from work.

Driving

- Lock your doors and roll up your windows before driving into the parking lot.
- Scan the parking area for suspicious persons — have a plan ready in case you are uncomfortable with the situation.
- Park in well-lit areas — avoid alleys, wooded areas, and tunnels.
- Avoid having to reach back into the vehicle for anything.
- After work, try to avoid walking to your vehicle alone, or at least have someone watch from a window.

Taking a bus

- Plan to arrive at bus stops just before the bus arrives.
- Avoid isolated or poorly lit bus stops.
- If you see suspicious or menacing people at your stop, get off at the next stop.
- If possible, have someone meet you when you arrive at your destination.

If you are confronted

- If you are attacked, scream loudly and for as long as possible. As soon as possible, run to the nearest well-lit area.
- If someone grabs your purse, deposit bag, or other property, do not resist, and do not chase the thief.
- Call the police immediately and try to recall the mannerisms of the attacker.

Hazardous products

If you are expected to work with hazardous products such as cleaning products or other chemicals, your employer must provide training in WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System). The system uses consistent labelling to help you recognize hazardous materials. The labels provide specific information on handling, storing and disposing of hazardous materials.

If your job requires you to use pesticides or clean up pesticide spills, you must also be certified to handle pesticides.

If you have been successfully trained in how to handle hazardous materials, you should be able to answer the following four questions:

- What are the hazards of the products you are using?
- How do you protect yourself?
- What should you do in case of an emergency or spill?
- Where do you get more information on these products?



Safety tips

- Read the labels on chemicals.
- Use all protective equipment recommended by the manufacturer and employer.
- When you are done, store chemicals properly.
- Use chemicals only as directed.

Biological hazards

Contact with blood or body fluids may be uncommon in the retail industry, but it can and does occur. Contact with blood and body fluids poses a risk of contracting hepatitis, HIV (the AIDS virus), and other infections. If there is a risk of exposure in your job, your employer must provide you with specific training in how to work safely. Vaccination against hepatitis B must be made available at no cost to you upon request if you have, or may have, occupational exposure to the hepatitis B virus.

For the employer

For more information, see the WorkSafeBC publication *Controlling Exposure: Protecting Workers from Infectious Disease*.

Cleaning

When cleaning bathrooms you may come across blood spills and bodily wastes such as vomit or feces. Follow these guidelines:

- Use disposable waterproof gloves to avoid contact with skin.
- Use disposable towels to clean up all visible materials.
- Discard towels and gloves in a waterproof garbage bag.
- Disinfect the area with a bleach solution.

Preventing infection

You can be exposed to infected blood and other body fluids if your skin is punctured by a contaminated sharp object such as a needle. To reduce your risk of exposure, follow these guidelines:

- Don't pick up potentially contaminated sharp objects unless you have been instructed how to do so safely.
- Wear disposable waterproof gloves.
- Use tongs or pliers to pick up needles or other sharp objects.
- Place needles in a disposal container specifically designed for sharps.
- Look before reaching above and behind boxes, furniture, and equipment.
- Don't lift garbage bags by hand from underneath. They may contain sharp, contaminated objects.



If you think you've been exposed

- Get first aid right away.
- Report the incident to your supervisor.

Knives, box cutters, and other sharps

Box cutters are common tools for retail workers, and knives and other sharps such as meat slicers are essential tools for deli counter workers. Safe work habits will decrease your chances of losing time from work... or losing a finger.

Using knives and box cutters

- Use the right tool for the job, and make sure it is sharp.
- Always cut away from your body.
- Always store sharps separately from other tools and utensils.
- Use a flat surface to cut on.
- Never use a knife for anything other than cutting.
- Hold the knife in your stronger hand.
- To clean the knife, direct the edge away from you and wipe with the cloth on the dull edge of the blade.
- Wear leather or metal mesh gloves if your employer requires them.

Grocery deli workers

When cleaning knives and sharp blades, follow these guidelines:

- Clean them immediately after use or place them in a “sharps only” container near the sink.
- Don’t drop knives or equipment blades into the dishwasher or sink.

When using meat slicers or other power equipment, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have training on the specific piece of equipment, and follow written safe work procedures.
- Don’t wear loose clothing or dangling jewellery that could get caught in equipment.
- Use guards and glides at all times.
- Never reach across the blade.
- Turn the slicer off according to manufacturer’s instructions when not in use.
- Unplug equipment before cleaning.
- Use cut-resistant gloves on both hands when cleaning.

Power tools and equipment

You may be required to use power tools if you work in a hardware store or a business such as a bicycle or furniture shop where your job involves assembling product. You may also be required to use power equipment such as compactors, dock levelers, carton crushers, meat slicers, or other food preparation equipment. These tools and equipment have the potential to cause serious injury, particularly if they're poorly maintained or used without due caution.

Before you start

- Never use a power tool or piece of equipment unless you have been trained and authorized to do so. Follow safe work procedures.
- Inspect tools prior to use. Only use tools that are in good operating condition. Check power cords daily for tears or cuts in the insulation, loose connections (plug to wire and wire to tool), and poor ground connections. Report all defective tools to your supervisor, and mark them "Not to be used."
- Wear hearing protection and tie back long hair.
- Check that all guards and safety devices are in place and functioning properly. Check that the power switch is in the off position before plugging the tool in. Only the operator should turn the tool on.

While the tool or equipment is operating

- Stay with running power tools. Do not walk away from a machine you have been using until it comes to a complete stop. It takes only a few seconds for a power tool to "wind down" after it has been shut off, but it still has the potential to injure someone if the parts are still moving.
- Keep your hands away from moving parts.
- Make sure the cutting part of a tool will not come in contact with the power cord.
- Maintain a firm grip at all times.
- Turn off power tools before making adjustments. Always unplug or lock out the tool before making adjustments or changing settings if there is any chance that the tool could accidentally start up.

Noise

Noise in some retail areas where powered equipment is used may reach harmful levels that can cause hearing loss. Exposure to sound over 85 decibels over an 8-hour period requires hearing protection. Employers are required to inform workers if sound levels are at 82 decibels or more.

Safety tips

- Wear approved hearing protection whenever you enter an area posted as having high levels of noise, whether it is noisy when you enter or not. Noisy equipment can start up at any time.
- Ensure that your hearing protection is the right type for the environment and that it is comfortable.
- Ear buds (headphones) are not work equipment.
- Avoid playing music at high levels, which can cause hearing loss and prevent you from hearing warning signals.



Forklifts and pallet jacks

Forklifts (or lift-trucks), powered or manual pallet jacks, and other lifting equipment are an essential part of many retail operations. Although they help prevent lifting injuries, they can also cause serious and, all too often, fatal injuries.

If you are required to use a forklift or pallet jack, your employer must provide you with training for the specific piece of equipment. Driving a forklift requires completion of a certificate course in B.C. Working in areas where forklifts operate can also be hazardous, and requires training and ongoing alertness to prevent injuries. Forklift accidents are usually catastrophic but always preventable.

For the employer

WorkSafeBC has many excellent safety resources for forklift operators, including the StartSafe series, which can be used as handouts for orientations and crew talks. Go to [WorkSafeBC.com](https://www.worksafebc.com), and in the upper right corner search for “startsafe.”

Operating forklifts

- Do not operate the forklift unless it is running properly.
- Wear required PPE such as safety boots and a hard hat.
- Make sure you are trained to change the propane fuel tank or battery.
- Never carry a passenger or elevate a person on forks, pallets, or loads.
- Secure the load properly. Don't overload the forklift, even for short distances.
- Never stand or pass under an elevated load. Don't let anyone else do it either.
- When not stacking, carry loads at the lowest possible position.
- Never turn on a sloped surface.
- When you are finished using the forklift, lower the forks to the floor, set the brakes, turn off the motor, and remove the key.

Working around forklifts

A near miss involving a pedestrian and a forklift is not just a near miss — it is a near fatality. Forklift operators have a very limited field of vision because their view is obstructed by bars, cables, chains, and the load they may be carrying. They may not be able to see other workers in time to stop or take evasive action.

Training for those who work around forklifts is just as important as training for the forklift operators themselves. Follow these guidelines:

- Wear a high visibility vest when entering an area where forklifts are operating.
- Yield the right of way — even if the operator can stop the forklift quickly, the load may continue forward and crush you.

- Make eye contact with the operator. Wait until you have confirmation that the operator has noticed you before proceeding.
- Don't rely on sound to determine whether there's a forklift nearby — forklifts can be very quiet when they are coasting.
- Use designated walkways — don't take shortcuts through danger zones.

Operating pallet jacks

- Wear safety boots and keep your toes and fingers out from under the pallet.
- Secure the load to make sure it is stable and will not shift during movement. Restack it if necessary.
- Make sure the rollers are free of the bottom of the pallet.
- Push, don't pull — this puts less strain on your back and it's easier to stop.
- Know how to use the release handle.
- Get help if you are having a problem. Work with a partner when dealing with heavy loads.
- For a quick stop, lower the load.

For the employer

The WorkSafeBC video *Fields of Vision: Pedestrian Safety Around Forklifts* is a training and orientation resource available at [WorkSafeBC.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

Dealing with Emergencies

Every workplace needs a plan for dealing with emergencies. Your employer or supervisor should provide you with instruction in the emergency plan within your first few days on the job, as well as refresher training from time to time.

Once you have been trained, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- Where are the emergency phone numbers posted?
- Where are the fire extinguishers? How and when should they be used?
- Where are the fire alarms and fire exits?
- What is the evacuation plan for the building?
- What should you do during an earthquake?
- In case of evacuation, where outside the building is the assembly point and who should you report to?
- What other specialized equipment may be needed in case of an emergency, and how is it used?

For the employer

For more information, see the WorkSafeBC publication *Emergency Response Guide*.

Ask your employer to go through the emergency plans and procedures for your store. For example, ask your employer to review what to do in the case of an earthquake, fire, or bomb threat.

Earthquake

What to do during an earthquake

The basic rule is to duck, cover, and hold. Follow these guidelines:

- Get under a table or desk if you can and stay there until the shaking stops.
- Grab a table leg or other solid object and hold on until the shaking stops.
- Stay away from objects that might fall on you.
- Keep well away from glass — it might shatter.
- If you are in a car, stop the vehicle as soon as possible, preferably in an area away from bridges, trees, and power lines. Stay in the vehicle.

Evacuation

The only reasons for leaving a building due to earthquake are as follows:

- The building is on fire.
- There is structural damage to the building (for example, newly cracked or buckling walls).
- There is a gas leak.

If you must evacuate, follow these guidelines:

- Follow the evacuation procedure for your building.
- Don't panic.
- Stay clear of the outside of the building — windows may shatter, raining glass down on the ground below.
- Go to the pre-planned assembly point described in your employer's evacuation procedure.
- Follow your workplace procedure for returning to work once the earthquake is over.

Fire

Fires can be started by many things, including heating systems, cooking, discarded cigarettes, electricity, appliances, poor housekeeping, or the improper storage of chemicals. Quick action can prevent a small fire from becoming uncontrollable. Unfortunately, most people have never used a fire extinguisher or even seen one in use, let alone taken the time to note where they are located in their building.

Check your building procedures for the steps to take in case of fire. At least remember the following:

- Review the evacuation plan for your building.
- Know the location of fire extinguishers and escape routes.
- If you spot an unintended fire, sound the nearest alarm.
- Use a fire extinguisher only if you have been trained to do so.

First aid

It is important to get first aid promptly if an injury occurs. All businesses should have a first aid kit on-site. The type of kit and the need for a first aid attendant will depend on the number of employees, the type of industry, and the travel time to the nearest hospital. Most small retail stores require only a basic first aid kit, which includes such items as bandages, scissors, and latex gloves.

Your employer should provide you with information on how and where to get first aid at your workplace. Once you have received that training, you should know:

- How to get help if you are hurt but do not require an ambulance
- Who to report incidents to
- Whether there is a first aid attendant, first aid room, or first aid kit available



Other Resources

WorkSafeBC publications

- *Health and Safety for Retail Small Business*
- *Small Business Health and Safety Log Book*
- *Small Business Primer: A Guide to WorkSafeBC*
- *Preventing Violence, Robbery, and Theft*
- *3 Steps to Effective Worker Education and Training*
- *Working Alone: A Handbook for Small Business*
- *Understanding the Risks of Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI): An Educational Guide for Workers on Sprains, Strains, and other MSIs*
- *Back Talk: An Owner's Manual for Backs*
- *Effective Safety and Health Programs: The Key to a Safe Workplace and Due Diligence*
- *Managing Safety from the Supervisor's Perspective*



Occupational Health and Safety Regulation

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and the *Workers Compensation Act* describe specific legal and regulatory requirements for employers and workers. Go to WorkSafeBC.com for searchable versions of the Regulation, the *Act*, and associated policies and guidelines.

Industry associations

Shelfspace (formerly Retail BC)

www.shelfspace.ca

Retail Council of Canada

www.retailcouncil.org

WorkSafeBC offices

Visit our web site at WorkSafeBC.com.

Abbotsford

2774 Trethewey Street V2T 3R1

Phone: 604 276-3100

Toll-free: 1 800 292-2219

Fax: 604 556-2077

Burnaby

450 – 6450 Roberts Street V5G 4E1

Phone: 604 276-3100

Toll-free: 1 888 621-7233

Fax: 604 232-5950

Coquitlam

104 – 3020 Lincoln Avenue V3B 6B4

Phone: 604 276-3100

Toll-free: 1 888 967-5377

Fax: 604 232-1946

Courtenay

801 30th Street V9N 8G6

Phone: 250 334-8765

Toll-free: 1 800 663-7921

Fax: 250 334-8757

Kamloops

321 Battle Street V2C 6P1

Phone: 250 371-6003

Toll-free: 1 800 663-3935

Fax: 250 371-6031

Kelowna

110 – 2045 Enterprise Way V1Y 9T5

Phone: 250 717-4313

Toll-free: 1 888 922-4466

Fax: 250 717-4380

Nanaimo

4980 Wills Road V9T 6C6

Phone: 250 751-8040

Toll-free: 1 800 663-7382

Fax: 250 751-8046

Nelson

524 Kootenay Street V1L 6B4

Phone: 250 352-2824

Toll-free: 1 800 663-4962

Fax: 250 352-1816

North Vancouver

400 – 224 Esplanade Ave. W. V7M 1A4

Phone: 604 276-3100

Toll-free: 1 888 875-6999

Fax: 604 232-1558

Prince George

1066 Vancouver Street V2L 5M4

Phone: 250 561-3700

Toll-free: 1 800 663-6623

Fax: 250 561-3710

Surrey

100 – 5500 152 Street V3S 5J9

Phone: 604 276-3100

Toll-free: 1 888 621-7233

Fax: 604 232-7077

Terrace

4450 Lakelse Avenue V8G 1P2

Phone: 250 615-6605

Toll-free: 1 800 663-3871

Fax: 250 615-6633

Victoria

4514 Chatterton Way V8X 5H2

Phone: 250 881-3418

Toll-free: 1 800 663-7593

Fax: 250 881-3482

Head Office/Richmond

Prevention Information Line:

Phone: 604 276-3100

Toll-free: 1 888 621-7233 (621-SAFE)

Administration:

6951 Westminster Highway

Phone: 604 273-2266

Mailing Address:

PO Box 5350 Stn Terminal

Vancouver, BC V6B 5L5

After Hours Health & Safety Emergency:

Phone: 604 273-7711

Toll-free: 1 866 922-4357 (WCB-HELP)

